

BOMA Canada's Go Green Environmental Certification Takes Off in First Year

By [Ann White](#)

In 2005 BOMA Canada launched the [Go Green](#) Environmental Certification for Commercial Buildings. It is a voluntary program designed for existing buildings available to member and non-member commercial building owners that is delivered by BOMAs' local associations.

After its first year as a national program BOMA Go Green has taken root and is poised to become the Environmental Certification program of choice for existing buildings. Go Green has certified 86 buildings and there are numerous buildings at the initial stages of certification. The Federal Department of Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) has adopted Go Green Plus as the official national environmental program for existing buildings and in December BOMA hired [Mike Thibedeau](#) to be its first National Project Manager.

According to Deb Cross, Executive Vice President of BOMA Canada, "The [BOMA Go Green](#) program is taking off. It speaks to the desire of the commercial real estate community to contribute to helping the environment. It has exceeded our expectations."

[Go Green](#) and [LEED \(Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design\)](#) are the two leading green building certification programs in Canada. LEED Green Building Rating System® is focussed on assessing new construction high-performance, sustainable buildings. Go Green targets existing buildings owners who want to have a more environmentally friendly building. A Go Green certification cost less than \$5,000 while LEED is significantly more expensive.

[Go Green](#) is a national environmental recognition and certification program. Building owners can choose to participate in either Go Green or Go Green Plus. The Go Green certification requires implementing industry 'best practices' including ten minimum requirements in five key environmental areas; resource consumption, waste management, building materials, interior environment and occupant awareness.

Go Green Plus utilizes an online building audit for assessing and rating existing commercial buildings against best practices, standards and principles of green architecture. It offers more in-depth benchmarking helpful in planning maintenance programs that will improve the environmental performance of a building. Certification is valid for three years and Go Green recognition materials are provided for display at the building.

In December 2005, Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) adopted the Go Green Plus program as the official national environmental program for existing Federal Government buildings. Deb Cross said, "there are 317 buildings across the country that are included in the program" and "it is expected to take three years to rollout".

The [86 Go Green certified buildings](#) in Canada are located in B.C, Alberta and Quebec. The programs strength in the west reflects Go Greens origins in B.C. where the environmental movement is most advanced in Canada. There are numerous buildings at the initial stages of certification with strong demand emerging from Ontario.

In Alberta, the [Telus Convention Centre](#) in Calgary was the first in the Province to receive the Go Green certification. Commenting on the award Bill Partridge, BOMA Calgary's Executive Vice President said, "Tenants today are much more sophisticated in their lease requirements, specifying certain indoor environmental standards. In the future, tenants will also require specific levels of performance in terms of environmental stewardship."

According to Cross, Go Green was designed primarily for the office sector although industrial, institutional and retail properties have received Go Green certification. Cross added that adapting Go Green for multi-unit residential is 'a possibility' but at this stage the program is not applicable to residential buildings.

[Green Globes](#), the assessment program behind Go Green Plus, has been picked-up for use by the [U.S. Green Building Initiative \(GBI\)](#). The GBI describes Green Globes on its website as 'a revolutionary green management tool that provides architects, developers, builders and others in the construction community with an assessment protocol, rating system and guide for integrating environmentally friendly design into commercial structures.'

Also in the U.S., BOMA has launched [BOMA Energy Efficiency Program \(BEEP\)](#) a training initiative to help the commercial real estate industry counter rising energy costs and reduce energy consumption. The BOMA Foundation in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) [Energy Star](#) program developed BEEP. According to Deb Cross, "Canadians would benefit from taking the BEEP training program."